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184

Taboos Provided with vital force and a soul, ni, the forge, a living being, is surrounded by taboos aimed at protecting its material and spiritual integrity.

These taboos, numbering seven, are peculiar to the forge and to the altars which it contains; they concern not only the /123/ blacksmiths, but also his clients, the passers-by, whatever sex they may belong.

[253] 1. None may cook meat on the fire of the forge; it would be equivalent to "eating the meat of the Soba spirits." To break this rule deprives the fire of its strength and causes the abdomen of the person breaking the taboo to swell (1).

1. It is said of the culprit: soko dyeni bala, fa ta sababu yalla: "he is full of meat cooked on the fire of the forge."

2. No insult may be uttered near the forge, particularly if it is of a sexual nature (2). This would be equivalent to insulting the fire;

2. Neni teke fã nda la: "Insults are not to be spoken at the door of the forge."

the flame would waver and, despite the bellows, no heat would rise from the hearth.

[201] 3. The sole of the foot and the palm of the hand are never presented to the fire, for the forge is alive and just as these same gestures made towards another human being would bring about physical disorders, so the various parts of the forge are vulnerable and may break (the hammer or anvil) or tear (the membrane of the bellows) (3).

3. Se n[illegible]ege tere te jira fa na: "The te[illegible] of the sole of the foot must not be p[illegible]sented to the forge."

4. Any quarrel [illegible] misunderstanding disturbs the forge, upsets it, and harms the work (4).

4. Dadyuguya, filibatya, kunasirinlenya, konodyuguya te kẹ fã nda la: "Meanness,

Pottery

323 The ancient Bambara did not know about pottery. At the time they
773 lived in caverns, they let their meat dry in the sun on the rocks. Next, they manufactured receptacles by hollowing out stones, of which certain unused millstones /125/ seen today are copies. When they had invented fire, they cooked meat by spitting it with skewers of green sunzun wood and by exposing it to flames and live coals.

Later, they shaped and dried vessels of coarse clay, imitating the hollowed-out stones. One of these vessels, which was exposed to the fire in order to cook the food it contained, was observed to have changed color, hardened, and become more resistant. In this way they developed the technology of making pottery at a time when they still had only wooden tools.

323 Since this technology is related to the invention of fire, the wives
326 of the blacksmiths were the first to practice it.(1). Today they form
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1. The different techniques of pottery making were supposedly revealed to the village of Gwondougou (see p. 155) by the Soba spirits of the crossroads.

a society (tô) in each village and own many altars entrusted to the care of the head of the society.

The principal altar, the dyo kala, which represents the thumb of the potters, is made of wood carved in the shape of a thumb and engraved with symbolic lines. To learn her trade, each initiate is lightly touched on the head with it. The head of the society spills her blood over it in the case of a broken taboo affecting the society. But its principal function is to be the receptacle for the spiritual forces of the group: upon a member's death, this object, placed upon the corpse, gathers up the soul which escapes from the body.

[252] In certain villages, the pots with holes, nintin, used for cooking couscous, are placed near the village upon the pile of ashes from the great hearth where the pots are fired (see Pl. IV, a); they also serve as altars at the time when the potters are consecrated.

323 Since her childhood the potter, following the example of her
561 seniors, practices kneading and shaping little pots, bokofani (literal-
575 ly, little clay pots). After excision at the required age, she joins

364 778 796 the chief throws dust three times to the four cardinal points. The masker then stands in the wind in such a way as to receive the smoke; the chief and the members crouch in line behind him with their mouths open to inhale better. When the wind changes its direction they all move to continue this fumigation, wusuli, which constitutes a purification as well as an increment of forces. At the moment the fire is almost out, the most courageous of the participants stamps on it in order to assimilate better the nyama which it exudes. The ashes, [804] gathered by the chief, are distributed, the unit of measurement being the gourd mure. An important share goes to the nyama boli, another is given as an offering to Faro, and a third is distributed among the members.

Several days later, the group goes to the river bank to the sound of drums beating out the murumuruw foli (literally, rhythm of the refuse); they throw the ashes reserved for Faro into the water and, continuing to dance, return to the village.

364 778 252 Those ashes given to the members are used to prepare the potass which is mixed into the millet cake, the daily food of the Bambara, and which will make the members of the family share in the powers contained in the nyamanto.

364 778 The eating of this mixture closes the cycle of the transfer of forces, which were temporarily communicated to the refuse by the individuals, then recovered by Faro, and finally redistributed to the social body.

III. Rain Rites

789 241 At the time the first work is done in the fields, a drawing is made with millet mash upon the tree of the Kworè in the shape of a lozenge inscribed within a rectangle, which represents "the great fire which issued /204/ from the cardinal angles" at the time of their creation. While this is being done, the following words are spoken: "The four elbows (the lozenge) are the fire of the angles; here is the anniversary of the Kworè." The clearing of the field or the first plowing always symbolizes the very first clearing obtained through fire.

789 796 794 During the month of May, the members of the Kworè society make sacrifices upon their altars before the first rumbling of thunder in order to purify the first sky where clouds are formed from the impure passage of Mousso Koroni. The chief gathers the members about the tree and recites the following prayer:

857 "dog" and "the sexual parts of a man," and it seems evident
831 that the expression n-Tomo-ulu should be taken in the latter
195 sense. This is all the more likely since in the similar organization among the Khassonké the same apparatus is called khe-fengo, literally, "thing of a man," that is, "sexual parts of a man."

857 The great festival of the association takes place every
796 year after the harvest and does not differ essentially from the one celebrated at the same time by all the brotherhoods. It involves offerings and sacrifices to the genie-protector, communion by the n-Tomo-den' at a corporate banquet, and the admission of new members. The following is a detailed description. [238]

At the instigation of the n-Tomo-tigi, the brotherhood's field has been harvested and to the grain collected has been added whatever the boys could obtain from their families or friends by any means, even theft. From this millet the n-Tomo-
[273] tigi has had dlo (beer) prepared, which is drunk in great quantities on such occasions. The "elders" (koro-u), relatives, and friends can be counted on to send their contributions in kind.

Each n-Tomo-den' is given a little outfit appropriate to the occasion. The ceremonial costume is put in order; the dloki and trousers are washed and ironed, if need be, and the mask is rubbed with vegetable butter (si tlu) to give it gloss.

On the day set, everything is in readiness. Many gourds of dege (1) and to (2), numerous jars of beer (dlo), and also

● [258]

1. Dege is made by putting coarsely ground millet into a small quantity of water.

2. A native mush.

some kola nuts have been assembled, along with sacrificial victims.

857 The n-Tomo-den', each leading a chicken on a string,
796 go to the meeting place in single file, with the n-Tomo-tigi
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243 classification is based on the distinction between the sorghums of ordinary soils and those of inundated soils. The latter are sown in August in nursery beds in fresh non-inundated ground and are transplanted at the end of the rainy season in land exposed by the receding waters. The yields vary from 400 to 1,200 kilograms per hectare.

[252 273] Millet is consumed in the form of flour or is used to make a fermented beverage, dolo, which is something like weak beer.

Wheat is cultivated in the wadies where the water is shallow from November to February. Cultivation is carried out with or without irrigation in seed holes 25 centimeters apart and 4 centimeters deep, where the farmer deposits a pinch of seed (70 kilograms of seeds are necessary per hectare). The harvest is at the end of March at the latest. The average yields are from 1,000 to 1,500 kilograms. The wheats are generally tender and give excellent flours for bread, but this culture is still in the experimental stage.

Rice is cultivated on 80,000 hectares, of which almost half are in the central Delta (Mopti, Macina, Djenné) which constitutes the true rice granary of the territory. Outside of the Delta, the productive regions are: the upper basin of the Niger (Bamako), the lake and post-lake region (from Lake Débo to Ansongo), the region near Guinea (south of Sikasso and Bougouni), and finally 10,000 hectares of irrigated rice of the Niger Office.

Two kinds of rice are cultivated: one, an African rice (Oryza glaberrima) in the Delta, is a floating rice capable of enduring considerable submersion. The other, of Asiatic origin (Oryza saliva [sic]), is cultivated in the upper valley of the Niger and in the valleys of the small water courses. Lastly, a mountain rice which grows on dry ground must be mentioned.

What characterizes native rice culture is the absence of [30] hydraulic control. It is a rice culture of submersion, thus very insecure. Since 1944 attempts have been made to end these processes of "wild" submersion. In the upper valley of the Niger where the plains are insufficiently and tardily submerged, rice is sown at the beginning of the rainy season, and when it attains a growth of 20 to 25 centimeters, the water is sent gradually into the plain. When the rice is mature, the water is drawn off into the river through overflow outlets. In the Delta, where the rise of the Niger is utilized directly, regulating works prevent the flood from

243 312

[sic] [should be sativa - Analyst]

244 The Bambara groundnut ripens its seed underground. It is cultivated from the southern border of the Sahara to the Cape, but its primary home [31] is in the Sudan where the greatest number of cultivated varieties is found. (1)

1. Jacques Félix, for a study on the Bambara groundnut (Voandzeia subterrena), Agriculture tropicale [Tropical Agriculture], January-February, 1950. [Ed., Revue d'agronomie tropicale.]

Manioc and yams at certain points along the Niger escape the devastations of the Acridiidae insects which can not attack their roots.

Other crops are used to balance the diet: condiments and [263] fleshy plants, such as, pimento, sesame, various labiates, okra, [177] sorrel, squash, peanuts (imported in the sixteenth century from America). Peanuts, to thrive, need loose, light soil. They are sown in June at the beginning of the rainy season and are harvested in [252] November. The natives eat them roasted; they make oil and soap from them and give the stalks to their animals. Cultivation is entirely in the hands of the natives. In Senegal manpower is insufficient; [464] before 1940 thousands of Sudanese workers were called upon each [167] season, particularly Bambara, the "Navétanes," who hired themselves out to the farmers of Senegal in order to acquire the textiles and other products they needed. The peanut is an export product. Also cultivated are nitrogenous vegetables (Bambara groundnuts, black-eyed peas, dolichos, kissis, etc.) and the numerous and varied amaranths, tomatoes, eggplants, gourds, and, since 1940, potatoes which are grown more and more.

222 Finally, we will cite: a) the gathering of wild plants which 263 serve as condiments: the fruits of the baobab (Adansonia digitata), of the corchorus, of the Parkia biglobosa [néré], and of the karite tree (Butyrospermum), formerly called the "butter tree," which is cultivated to some degree -- the fruit is something like that of the palm tree and contains a core whose kernels enclose a fatty matter, shea butter, valued for making soap, as an illuminant, for the toilet; 222 b) the gathering of scarcity foods: baobab, cenchrus, cassia, the kola nut (Sterculia acuminata). Kola nuts are much prized by the natives;

Kola nuts are much prized by the natives;
222 their caffeine content makes them a stimulant and energizer. The
[276] Bambara use seven kinds of kola nuts in their sacrificial and
782 divinatory rites: 1. Dangoro (red nut); 2. Geleworo (white nut);
787 Sosokuworo (a red nut pointed at one end); 4. Flaniworo (yellow kola); 5. Worodanda (kola without opening) which has no apparent cleft where it may be split open; 6. Bassiworo (a dark red, bitter nut); 7. Ryeworo (nut of light and indeterminate color). (This list is given us by G. Dieterlen in her Essai sur la religion Bambara [Essay on the Bambara Religion]).

252 To prepare kola nuts, they are placed in baskets of very coarse mesh lined with leaves that are moistened every four or five days.

245 Among cultivated trees, other than banana, mango, lemon, orange, pineapple trees [ananas, may be a kind of pine; the pineapple is not a tree fruit], etc., one must mention the Acacia albida, which plays a large role in Bambara mythology. In the dry season, it is used as fodder for cattle.

[32] C. Textile Crops

248 Side by side with these food crops, the Bambara cultivate textile plants which they use in addition to the wild textile plants. Among the principal ones, we shall point out the da (Hibiscus
[227 cannabinus) whose fibers are used by fishermen to make their nets.
286] It does not rot and is a possible rival of jute. The labor to exploit it, pulling up the stalks, retting, extraction of the fibers, is done in the dry season, when many hands are available. (1)

1. G. Spitz, L'Ouest africain français [The French West African]. [Ed., L'Ouest africain, A.O.F. et Togo; The West African, French West Africa and Togo.]

Cotton, which grows spontaneously in many places, is cultivated near the villages as an annual plant; it is a perennial plant which renews itself every four or five years. During the cultivation cycle, it is grown between millet and maize. The harvesting is
[287] done by women; it is picked out and spun by women, but it is woven

Ba
773 tools and the throwing weapon were made. Then, unfired pottery and weaving were invented; and men finally came to know stone tools, iron and the forge. The technique of making dwellings seems to have developed more slowly.

a. Fishing

Ba
Bo
226 Side by side with populations who specialize in the art of fish-
463 ing, such as the Bozo or the Somono caste, all the Bambara fish in
564 the [96] rivers or watercourses in the neighborhood of their dwellings. A detailed study has been made by J. Daget (1). The Somono, who

1. Jacques Daget, "La pêche dans le delta central du Niger" [Fishing in the Central Delta of the Niger], Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. XIX (1949), No. 1.

are the caste of Bambara fishermen, use traps and nets for fishing; the Bozo remain faithful rather to harpoons and small nets. They are
Ba the ones who almost always make the pirogues, for they alone may
Bo enter in rapport with the spirit of the water, Faro. The nets are of
286 knotted mesh made with a weaver's shuttle, sia, and a cylindrical
227 mold, pako. The band of the net, as it is being made, is nearly always attached to a wooden bridge especially conceived for this purpose, the kale or dio soyo kala, a regular tetrahedron whose edges
Ba are about 20 centimeters long, one of which is prolonged by a handle
Bo 1.50 meters long. The fisherman, seated on the ground, puts the
283 bridge before him, keeping the handle close to his leg. The fibers
624 used in netmaking are da (Hibiscus cannabinus), kie (Figna unguiculata), cotton, and now European thread.

Bo The Bozo construct weirs from cut and joined tree branches;
226 the weirs assume several different forms according to the regions and
Bo the snares used. Fish are used for human consumption; they are eaten
● Ba fresh, grilled, fried or boiled, or preserved by smoking or drying. Oil,
251 used for cooking and as a lubricant, is extracted from certain fish,
● 252 such as the tineni.

Ba Fishing in Bambara villages is done communally under the
226 direction of a fishing chief at the time the waters recede. Precise rules of fishing rights and of rents due the masters of the waters are respected everywhere.

793 782 62 778 The gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, assumes office from the first day and offers a sacrifice in the name of his people. On the trunk of the tree, about a meter from the ground, he pours d'lo, or millet beer, and dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with water, and causes a flow of blood from hens, roosters, goats, and sometimes from a young bull. After this general sacrifice, individual ones follow, for, in order to /118/ place himself under the protection of the genie, each family head in order of seniority offers it a little dégé and a little blood, through the intermediary of his leader, the priest. And on the trunk of the tree there is nothing but great blood stains with feathers, hairs, and shreds of skin stuck in their midst with the remains of chewed kola nuts. Then come the dances, and men, women, and children go into a frenzy at the sound of drums; and the tumult is indescribable.

Sacrifices offered to the dasiri

778 782 796 A path a meter wide leads from the village to the fetish tree which is always located in the middle of a small grove if possible. Heads of families sacrifice to it several times a year -- on the morning after the konio, or first night of marriage, for example, but the festival in which the whole village takes part is annual. The ceremony has greater importance every second year, and every seventh year it degenerates into an orgy.

During the sacrifice the women stay at the edge of the sacred grove, and only the men and boys go inside and surround the fetish. After an offering of dégé and a little d'lo, the throat of a sheep or goat is cut in the name of the whole village, and the head of each family, comes with hens, sheep, goats, etc., according to the family's means and the number of members; the meat piles up. The hens are plucked on the spot, the large pieces are cut up, and the women carry it all back to the village. Each family head is given a piece as big as a fist from the first sacrifice offered in the name of all, and this, too, is [257] taken back to the village; the rest is roasted and then grilled on the spot and eaten by the men, without salt, pepper, or any kind of seasoning. The dégé and d'lo of the main sacrifice are drunk under